

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 LAGOS 000098

SIPDIS

STATE PASS DOE FOR DAS JBRODMAN AND CGAY
TREASURY FOR ASEVERENS AND SRENENDER
COMMERCE FOR KBURRESS
STATE PASS TRANSPORTATION FOR MARAD
STATE PASS USAID FOR GWEYNAND AND SLAWAETZ
STATE FOR DS/IP/AF, AF/EX, DS/IP/OPO, DS/ICI/PII, DS/DSS/ITA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/24/2016

TAGS: [EPET](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [PTER](#) [KHLs](#) [PINR](#) [ETRD](#) [CASC](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: OIL WORKER HOSTAGE UPDATE SITREP #15

REF: A. LAGOS 90 AND PREVIOUS

[B](#). ABUJA 120

Classified By: Acting Consul General William Howe for Reasons 1.4 (D & E)

SUMMARY

[1](#). (C) Ecodrill Country Manager Peter Quiatkowski's intermediaries provided photos and audio of Nigel Watson-Clarke from their visit to the kidnappers' camp. Morale of their young yet heavily-armed captors may be waning in the face of the arrest of their two leaders and fear that a big payoff may not be forthcoming. Mission, UK, and industry representatives plan to further develop this line of communication. The British plan to organize a family appeal through the media for Watson-Clarke and recommends the USG do the same for Landry. Bayelsa state officials continue to offer increasingly less credible assurances that the hostages' release is imminent. Mission is pursuing suggestions Delta State officials could be in touch with the hostage takers. Mission remains on alert to support their repatriation while continuing to pursue all promising leads. End summary.

HOSTAGE WELFARE UPDATE:
INTERMEDIARIES RETURN WITH HOSTAGE PHOTOS, AUDIO,...

[2](#). (C) Quiatkowski provided additional information from the two intermediaries who visited the kidnap gang's camp, now reported to be at a local religious shrine at Escravos, close to Okpopo, Delta State. The intermediaries claim the hostages have been held at this site before. Quiatkowski does not know the intermediaries' names. He describes one as confident and older, possibly in his forties, with a claimed association to the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, who says he is assisting with the crisis for altruistic reasons. The other is younger, nervous, and seems more concerned about the monetary reward for his assistance.

[3](#). (C) The intermediaries returned with two photographs on a camera phone of the UK hostage, Nigel Watson-Clarke. One photograph is a close-up with little other discernible detail, but the second shows trees and sand in the background. Data on the phone confirms that the photographs were taken on Sunday, January 22.

[4](#). (C) The intermediaries also deleted several photographs before returning it to Quiatkowski, possibly because the photos contain images that reveal information about the hostages' location. The data may be recoverable and the phone has been turned over to the FBI to be taken to the US for analysis.

[5](#). (C) The intermediaries recorded two audio clips during their visit, which Ecodrill confirms as Watson-Clarke's voice. In the first clip, played for us over the telephone, Watson-Clarke's voice is clear and distinct, though he sounds nervous. He confirms that his name is Nigel Watson-Clarke, he is British, and that he knows Peter Quiatkowski and sees him in Lagos. In the second, not heard by Acting Pol-Econ Chief, he is described as sounding more confused, and there is considerable background noise resembling youths raised voices as well as a ship's horn. The horn is of particular interest, as Tidex personnel report ships in the area use horns rarely around Escravos, but their use is more likely in oil or liquid natural gas export terminals.

...AND INFORMATION ABOUT THEIR CAPTORS

[6](#). (C) The intermediaries claimed the hostages were all fine but responded vaguely when asked explicitly if they had seen all four hostages. They reported eighty-three captors, and

described them as "...just small boys," but heavily armed. The group is now led by someone referred to as the "Commander General," since the two original leaders have been arrested, but it is unclear whether the intermediaries have been speaking to the Commander General or a rank-and-file member.

17. (C) The youths confirmed delivery of the medicine, but say it was given to a "doctor" instead of to the hostages. The youths report the captors are concerned the medicine may be poison, sent to kill the hostages, and so justify military action against the group.

18. (C) The two report there were no discussions of monetary demands for the hostages' release, and say the captors' claim they have not been in contact with the Bayelsa State government. They asked for approximately \$11,000 in transport and "sitting fees" for another trip to the encampment, along with approximately \$3,500 and certain food items as a goodwill gesture for the community which is hosting the group. (Comment: In Nigeria this size of payment is more commensurate with "dash" or a payoff for services rendered, than a hostage ransom, for which demands might start in the millions of dollars. End comment.)

19. (C) The intermediaries further claimed they could negotiate Nigel Watson-Clarke's release, but when this was suggested to Watson-Clarke he declined, unwilling to leave the others.

110. (C) The intermediaries report some discontent in the militia camp. While the group was well-equipped and supplied at the beginning of the crisis, they have not received any additional funds or provisions since it began. Their two leaders were arrested, and there was growing concern that they may not get anything else out of the crime. (Comment: This seems to confirm that at least the first two arrests made were in fact leaders of the kidnap gang. Both the intermediaries and POL Counselor report the name of one of the arrested as resembling "Boro Tutu." End Comment).

111. (C) Acting Consul General, Acting Pol-Econ Chief, and FBI met with the British Deputy High Commissioner, Scotland Yard, and representatives from Tidex and Ecodrill to discuss how to follow-up on the line of communication Peter Quiatkowski has established through the two intermediaries to GON.

BRITISH SUGGEST FAMILY APPEALS THROUGH MEDIA

112. (C) Scotland Yard believe appeals for mercy from the hostages' families could be beneficial to the hostages' morale and well-being and BBC and British press will develop one from Nigel Watson Clark's family. Scotland Yard suggests that USG do the same for Mr. Landry.

FIERY MEETING WITH CONFIDENT BAYELSA NEGOTIATORS...

113. (C) Econoff reports the Executive Committee coordinated a meeting with their five negotiators: George Timinimi ("former" FNDIC member, now oil company consultant); Hendricks Opukeme (Ijaw Youth Council, NDDC); Kennedy Orubebe (Ijaw Youth Council, NDDC); Jane Alekioc (former SSS); and the chair, Chief Joshua Benamaisia (former chair, Ijaw National Congress). None of the five negotiators have seen the hostages, instead working through "link men" who in turn communicate to the captors.

114. (C) The meeting mainly consisted of the negotiators airing their views on the crisis. Two of the negotiators, joined by Bayelsa Deputy Governor Ebibi, delivered a hostile diatribe condemning the US and UK for allowing the oil companies to ruin the Niger Delta. The other negotiators were either neutral or supportive of US and UK interests, but they clearly deferred to the hostile group.

115. (C) The group exuded more confidence than in the previous meeting, and were certain the crisis would be resolved by tonight. The Secretary to the Bayelsa State Government (SSG) said the negotiators had come to a consensus and would be meeting with the "link men" early this morning to work out remaining details of the hostages release. However, when asked to provide details about the anticipated release of the hostages, the negotiators deferred to the Governor, who was not present.

...BUT NEW DOUBTS ABOUT THEIR CREDIBILITY

116. (C) Meeting in Warri, Delta State, POL Counselor sources confirm the lack of direct contact between the Bayelsa negotiators and the kidnappers, raising some question whether they are even in contact. POL Counselor reported efforts through the Delta SSG had not been very productive up to now, but could prove more fruitful than Bayelsa contacts; this

course is still being worked.

17. (C) A Shell member of the crisis response team also doubts the Bayelsa team's veracity. Bayelsa Governor Goodluck Jonathan told a reliable contact of his that he had been personally threatened by the militia group holding the hostages. The contact assessed Jonathan as clearly out of his depth. The militia groups had been on former Governor Alamiyeseigha's payroll, so Jonathan has no credibility or standing with the militias.

18. (C) Econoff has learned that the photograph provided by the Bayelsa governor on Sunday was not obtained by either MSND or the five negotiators. The Bayelsa SSG stated that he contacted a separate individual named "Friday" who claimed connection to the militia group went to their camp to take the photo, possibly while their leader was away.

MEDIA REPORTS

19. (U) Reuters reported Delta SSS Director Adebayo Babalola announced that two suspects in the kidnapping were arrested, but print media reported three arrests made so far, confirmed by POL Counselor. Six suspects have been sought by the SSS since this weekend.

20. (U) Media also report large numbers of Ijaws leaving their homes in the creeks and seeking refuge in Warri, Yenagoa, and Port Harcourt. The refugees fear the military, reportedly building up in the area, may resort to force to resolve the crisis, and they could be caught in the crossfire.

NEW DETAILS ABOUT LIBERTY SERVICE ATTACK

21. (C) FBI forensics experts have uncovered additional details about the January 11 attack on the Liberty Service. Evidence and interviews reveal it was a very brutal attack, with the attackers forcefully manhandling the crew. Previous reports critical of Navy security personnel locking themselves inside the ship for their own protection now appear somewhat justified, as witnesses stated that the attackers were purposely looking for the security personnel to kill them.

COMMENT

22. (C) Mission remains prepared to provide full assistance in the event the hostages are released tonight, as predicted by the Bayelsa negotiating team. However, evidence supporting even indirect contact with those holding the hostages is weak. We continue to investigate additional sources of information and lines of communication to effect their release. End comment.
HOWE